

Affordable Housing
Economic Inequality
Race Relations
Religious Extremism

Gender Identity

Climate Change
Education
Identity
Social Mobility

Divisive Politics
Sexual Harassment
Obesity
Substance Abuse

Campus Free Speech

What drives differences in how we think about and talk about social problems?

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

SOC 163

Fall 2019

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10:00am-10:50am, 1092 Lincoln Hall

Instructor: Ilana Redstone

Department of Sociology

3074 Lincoln Hall

Contact: redstone@illinois.edu

Web: www.ilanaredstone.com

Available by appointment

Please use only email for contact

Please do not leave a voice mail

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we examine how we think, talk, and disagree about social problems. We begin the semester reading and learning about the sources of some of our most entrenched differences, some of which are political and some of which are philosophical. We then take this foundation and apply it to salient social problems. We will cover a wide range of topics and consistently discuss them from a range of perspectives. This means that we will discuss contributing factors and solutions as seen from across the political spectrum. For some students, closely-held beliefs will likely be challenged.

**Note: My inclusion or discussion of authors, works, or perspectives in this course should be interpreted neither as an endorsement nor as a condemnation.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I expect students to attend every class and to actively participate in class conversations—it is difficult to do well in this class if you do not attend and participate. I expect all readings to be completed prior to the corresponding class meeting and all work to be completed on time. I also insist upon acceptance of the following terms:

Commitment to Viewpoint Diversity, Intellectual Honesty, Mutual Understanding, and Constructive Disagreement. In order to create a classroom environment that supports respectful, critical inquiry through the free exchange of ideas, the following principles will guide our work:

- Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their opinion;
- Bring light, not heat;
- Reasonable minds can differ on any number of perspectives, opinions, and conclusions;
- Because constructive disagreement sharpens thinking, deepens understanding, and reveals novel insights, it is not just encouraged, it is expected;
- All viewpoints are welcome;
- No ideas—no matter how cherished—are immune from scrutiny and debate;
- Worldviews, interpretations, and perspectives will be identified as such whenever possible;
- You will not be graded on your opinions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course requirements, you will:

- Have a general understanding of the nature of the fundamental divergence in opinions on social problems
- Understand how a range of political perspectives may be brought to bear upon a variety of social problems
- Be an informed consumer of news and other media sources
- Recognize when a particular worldview is shaping opinions
- Be a more thoughtful, critical, and informed citizen
- Have a general understanding that (a) social problems are (often) a matter of perspective and (b) there are two sides to (just about) every story

REQUIRED TEXTS

Sowell, Thomas. 1987. A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles. Basic Books: New York.

Anonymous. Social Problems: Continuity and Change. Available for download in multiple formats at: <https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/> and on the Compass homepage.

Course reader

Additional readings will be linked on the Compass homepage.

ELECTRONIC ETTIQUETTE POLICY

Laptops, tablets, and phones in the classroom environment can undoubtedly be a distraction. These policies aim to minimize that effect.

Cell phone policy.

- Cell phones must be put away (not visible) and silenced for the duration of class.

Laptop/tablet policy.

- The use of laptops is not necessarily in your best interest. There is a body of research that suggests that they actually impede the learning process. That said, if you choose to use one in class, I will defer to your choice up until it becomes a problem or a distraction (either for you or for your classmates). Exceptions will be made for students with appropriate DRES documentation.

Recordings.

Audio or video recordings of any kind are strictly prohibited without written permission from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for students with appropriate DRES documentation, however sharing and distribution are **always** prohibited.

GRADING

Component	Point Value	Total
Discussion questions (over 14 weeks)	45	45
Social problems paper 1	100	100
Social problems paper 2	100	100
Class engagement	100	100
Take-home exam	100	100
Packback	50	50
Total points		495

This course will use a +/- system. Generally, 90% and above (446 points and higher) equates to an A, while 95% (470 points and higher) is an A+. Please note that there is no final exam during the final exam period for this course.

Discussion questions. *I want to hear from you.* You have the opportunity each week to submit two thoughtful discussion questions regarding the coming week's material. These questions must be emailed to me no later than 12 noon on Sunday as I need to have time to review them before class on Monday morning.

Social problems papers. You are required to write two papers for this course. The first is due on October 14 and the second is due on December 11. For each paper, you are required to discuss a social problem and include the following components: definition of the problem, description of who thinks it's a problem and why (and who doesn't and why, if appropriate), causes and solutions to the problem as viewed through left and right political perspectives (this last requirement means that you have to select a topic that is polarizing—in other words, something like sex trafficking might not be the best topic because there really isn't anyone

that's *pro*-sex trafficking). In writing your paper, your goal should be to present the arguments for the side with which you don't agree *as stridently* as those for your own side. As your guideline, I shouldn't be able to ascertain your personal point of view from reading your paper. A general rubric can be found at the end of this syllabus. All the standard expectations apply: 1-inch margins, 12 pt. font., and approximately 5-7 double-spaced pages, with appropriate citations (I don't care which format you use).

Class engagement.

Engagement = preparation + participation. Either one on its own is insufficient. Here are [some guidelines](#) (citation in link):

Engagement	Preparation (happens outside of class)	Participation (happens in class)
I am fully engaged	Exemplary preparation I read carefully and research background information on the author/topic ahead of time. I research social, cultural, historic, economic, political connections to the text/topic.	Animated participation I attend class and I speak daily. I try to advance the conversation by presenting evidence to support my ideas. I present related research, implications, or complexities in the text/situation/topic.
I am occasionally engaged	Novice preparation I read assignments ahead of time. I do basic research to understand the material, but I do not go beyond the obvious.	Occasional participation I attend class daily. I speak occasionally—mainly when called upon by the professor. Sometimes I present general evidence to support my position.
I'm not sure how to be engaged; I need some direction	Inadequate preparation Sometimes I do the reading. I don't research to understand the material, nor do I go beyond the obvious.	Inadequate participation My attendance is inconsistent. I participate only when prompted.
I am disengaged	No preparation I neither read nor research before class.	No participation My attendance is inconsistent. I do not speak in class.

Take-home exam.

There will be one take-home exam during the semester. This will be distributed on October 18 and will be due back on October 21.

Packback.

Participation is a requirement for this course, and the Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online curiosity community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask BIG questions about how what we're studying relates to life and the real world.

Writing amazing questions and answers on Packback will:

- Help you develop writing skills necessary for any career path
- Reinforce the imperative skill of justifying thoughts and claims with credible evidence- and then citing the evidence!
- Enhance critical thinking sought out by employers
- Deepen your understanding of the course content by gaining diverse insights and perspectives from your peers

My goals for using Packback are for us to engage with the material, reflect on readings and what we talk about in class, and engage with one another.

Your participation on Packback will count towards approximately 10% percent of your final grade.

In order to receive your points per week, you must post [1 Question and 2 Answers per week] **relevant to our class subject matter** per week.

Before you start posting, be sure to read the [Community Guidelines](#) found in the tutorial on Packback. If your post doesn't follow the Packback Community Guidelines, there is a chance it will be removed and you won't receive points for that post.

There will be a Sunday 11:59 PM deadline for submissions in your community each week.

Note: it takes 24 hours for the Packback team to moderate a post and send a coaching email. If by any reason your post is moderated because it does NOT meet the Community Guidelines, you will need to edit and re-publish your post to receive credit for the week. This is why it is important that you complete your Packback questions and responses far before the deadline in case your post is moderated.

How to Register on Packback:

You will receive a welcome email from holla@packback.co prompting you to finish registration and payment.

Packback has already created an account for you with your school email, *all you need to do is reset your password*. This email may be directed to spam or filtered out, so make sure you do a thorough scan of your inbox if you can't find the email.

Backup Registration Instructions:

If you search your inbox and still can't find the welcome email, or if you are new to the course, you may manually register by following the instructions below:

1. Navigate to <https://Packback.co/questions> and click "Register as a new student".
Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can login with your credentials.
2. Make sure to register with your SCHOOL email address and real first name and last name. Enter our class community's Community Lookup Key into the "Join a new Community" module on your dashboard. Please note, the following Community Lookup Key is only for locating the community; it is NOT a coupon code or access code.
Our Community Lookup Code: dc88d408-a68a-4a5e-8505-261115a63596
3. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

If you have ANY questions or concerns regarding Packback throughout the semester, please contact the customer support team at holla@packback.co!

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions

OTHER INFORMATION

Academic Integrity Policy. The Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to All Students will be applied in all instance of academic misconduct committed by students. This applies to all exams, presentations, assignments, and materials distributed or used in this course. You can review these policies at the following website:
<http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/index.html>.

Request for Special Accommodations. We are committed to providing a learning environment where our students can succeed. If you require special accommodations, please contact Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible. To contact DRES, you may visit 1207 S. Oak Street, Champaign, call 217-333-4603, or emails disability@illinois.edu. We will try to meet all accommodations once the process has started. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive to the beginning of the semester, but begin on the day you contact your professor with a current letter of accommodation from DRES.

I am grateful for the chance to teach this class. I look forward to being able to share these ideas with you and also to hearing about your perspectives and experiences. I expect that the course will keep you both busy and interested. Please don't hesitate to share comments, thoughts, suggestions, or questions.

SOC 163 Fall 2019 Reading Schedule*

For all of the linked articles: *If the links don't work, google the title with the source.*

FOR	READING FOR THAT DAY:
Wed, Aug 28	Quillette, Kimmel and Conflict Theory: Sociology Turns Its Lens onto One of Its Own (August 2018) Quillette, The Devolution of Social Science (October 2018)
Fri, Aug 30	SP, Chapter 1: Understanding Social Problems
Mon, Sept 2	NO CLASS
Wed, Sept 4	SP, Chapter 1: Understanding Social Problems
Fri, Sept 6	Sowell COV, Chapters 1 & 2: The Role of Visions
Mon, Sept 9	Sowell COV, Chapter 3: Visions of Knowledge and Reason
Wed, Sept 11	Sowell COV, Chapter 4: Visions of Social Processes
Fri, Sept 13	Sowell COV, Chapter 5: Varieties and Dynamics of Visions
Mon, Sept 16	Sowell COV, Chapter 6: Visions of Equality
Wed, Sept 18	Sowell COV, Chapter 7: Visions of Power
Fri, Sept 20	Sowell COV, Chapter 7: Visions of Power
Mon, Sept 23	Sowell COV, Chapter 8: Visions of Justice
Wed, Sept 25	Sowell COV, Chapter 8: Visions of Justice
Fri, Sept 27	
Mon, Sept 30	Sowell COV, Chapter 9: Visions, Values, and Paradigms
Wed, Oct 2	Bonilla-Silva RWR, Chapter 1: The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America
Fri, Oct 4	Bonilla-Silva RWR, Chapter 4: The Style of Color Blindness
Mon, Oct 7	Bonilla-Silva RWR, Chapter 5: "I Didn't Get That Job Because of a Black Man"
Wed, Oct 9	Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, "The Sweet Enchantment of Color-blind Racism in Obamerica"
Fri, Oct 11	Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, "The Sweet Enchantment of Color-blind Racism in Obamerica"
Mon, Oct 14	Fukuyama, Against Identity Politics (linked on Compass)
Wed, Oct 16	Fukuyama, Against Identity Politics (linked on Compass)
Fri, Oct 18	The Atlantic, The Case for Reparations (June 2014) Quillette, My Testimony on Reparations (June 2019)
Mon, Oct 21	SP, Chapter 3: Racial and Ethnic Inequality
Wed, Oct 23	SP, Chapter 3: Racial and Ethnic Inequality
Fri, Oct 25	NY Times, Closing the Racial Wealth Gap (April 2019) Quillette, Black American Culture and the Racial Wealth Gap (July

	2018)
Mon, Oct 28	The National Review, The Conservative Inequality Paradox (November 2017) Vox, America's wealth gap is split along racial lines — and it's getting dangerously wider (August 2016)
Wed, Oct 30	SP, Chapter 4: Gender Inequality
Fri, Nov 1	
Mon, Nov 4	SP, Chapter 4: Gender Inequality
Wed, Nov 6	Google's Ideological Echo Chamber (July 2017) Wired, The Actual Science of James Damore's Google Memo (August 2017) Quillette, The Google Memo: Four Scientists Respond (August 2017)
Fri, Nov 8	
Mon, Nov 11	SP, Chapter 14: Urban and Rural Problems
Wed, Nov 13	SP, Chapter 14: Urban and Rural Problems
Fri, Nov 15	NY Times, How the Rural-Urban Divide Became America's Political Fault Line (May 2019) Pew Research Center, Urban, suburban and rural residents' views on key social and political issues (May 2018) AEI, Urban-Rural divide isn't what it seems (July 2018)
Mon, Nov 18	NY Times, How the Rural-Urban Divide Became America's Political Fault Line (May 2019) Pew Research Center, Urban, suburban and rural residents' views on key social and political issues (May 2018) AEI, Urban-Rural divide isn't what it seems (July 2018)
Wed, Nov 20	SP, Chapter 11: Schools and Education
Fri, Nov 22	SP, Chapter 11: Schools and Education
Mon, Dec 2	The Atlantic, The World Might be Better Off Without College for Everyone (January 2018) Quillette, Bryan Caplan's 'The Case Against Education' — A Review (June 2018) Inside Higher Ed, The Case Against 'The Case Against Education' (October 2018)
Wed, Dec 4	The Atlantic, The World Might be Better Off Without College for Everyone (January 2018) Quillette, Bryan Caplan's 'The Case Against Education' — A Review (June 2018) Inside Higher Ed, The Case Against 'The Case Against Education' (October 2018)
Fri, Dec 6	OPEN
Mon, Dec 9	Sowell (D&D), Chapter 5: Social Visions and Human Consequences

Wed, Dec 11	Sowell (D&D), Chapter 5: Social Visions and Human Consequences and Wrap-Up
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*Additional readings may be added to Compass as relevant.

*COV refers to Conflict of Visions (hard copy book). D&D refers to Discrimination and Disparities (in reader), RWR refers to Racism without Racists (in reader), and SP refers to Social Problems (linked on Compass).

Grading Rubric for Papers
(adapted from the UC Davis English Department Composition Program)

	The A paper	The B paper	The C paper	The D paper	The F paper
Ideas (20 possible points)	<p>Excels in responding to assignment. Interesting, demonstrates sophistication of thought. Central idea/thesis is clearly communicated, worth developing; limited enough to be manageable. Paper recognizes some complexity of its thesis: may acknowledge its contradictions, qualifications, or limits and follow out their logical implications. Understands and critically evaluates its sources, appropriately limits and defines terms.</p>	<p>A solid paper, responding appropriately to assignment. Clearly states a thesis/central idea, but may have minor lapses in development. Begins to acknowledge the complexity of central idea and the possibility of other points of view. Shows careful reading of sources, but may not evaluate them critically. Attempts to define terms, not always successfully.</p>	<p>Adequate but weaker and less effective, possibly responding less well to assignment. Presents central idea in general terms, often depending on platitudes or clichés. Usually does not acknowledge other views. Shows basic comprehension of sources, perhaps with lapses in understanding. If it defines terms, often depends on dictionary definitions.</p>	<p>Does not have a clear central idea or does not respond appropriately to the assignment. Thesis may be too vague or obvious to be developed effectively. Paper may misunderstand sources.</p>	<p>Does not respond to the assignment, lacks a thesis or central idea, and may neglect to use sources where necessary.</p>

Organization & coherence (20 possible points)	<p>Uses a logical structure appropriate to paper's subject, purpose, audience, thesis, and disciplinary field. Sophisticated transitional sentences often develop one idea from the previous one or identify their logical relations. It guides the reader through the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas.</p>	<p>Shows a logical progression of ideas and uses fairly sophisticated transitional devices; e.g., may move from least to more important idea. Some logical links may be faulty, but each paragraph clearly relates to paper's central idea.</p>	<p>May list ideas or arrange them randomly rather than using any evident logical structure. May use transitions, but they are likely to be sequential (first, second, third) rather than logic-based. While each paragraph may relate to central idea, logic is not always clear. Paragraphs have topic sentences but may be overly general, and arrangement of sentences within paragraphs may lack coherence.</p>	<p>May have random organization, lacking internal paragraph coherence and using few or inappropriate transitions. Paragraphs may lack topic sentences or main ideas, or may be too general or too specific to be effective. Paragraphs may not all relate to paper's thesis.</p>	<p>No appreciable organization; lacks transitions and coherence.</p>
Support (20 possible points)	<p>Uses evidence appropriately and effectively, providing sufficient evidence and explanation to convince.</p>	<p>Begins to offer reasons to support its points, perhaps using varied kinds of evidence. Begins to interpret the evidence and explain connections between evidence and main ideas. Its examples bear some relevance.</p>	<p>Often uses generalizations to support its points. May use examples, but they may be obvious or not relevant. Often depends on unsupported opinion or personal experience, or assumes that</p>	<p>Depends on clichés or overgeneralizations for support, or offers little evidence of any kind. May be personal narrative rather than essay, or summary rather than analysis.</p>	<p>Uses irrelevant details or lacks supporting evidence entirely. May be unduly brief.</p>

			evidence speaks for itself and needs no application to the point being discussed. Often has lapses in logic.		
Style (20 possible points)	Chooses words for their precise meaning and uses an appropriate level of specificity. Sentence style fits paper's audience and purpose. Sentences are varied, yet clearly structured and carefully focused, not long and rambling.	Generally uses words accurately and effectively, but may sometimes be too general. Sentences generally clear, well structured, and focused, though some may be awkward or ineffective.	Uses relatively vague and general words, may use some inappropriate language. Sentence structure generally correct, but sentences may be wordy, unfocused, repetitive, or confusing.	May be too vague and abstract, or very personal and specific. Usually contains several awkward or ungrammatical sentences; sentence structure is simple or monotonous.	Usually contains many awkward sentences, misuses words, employs inappropriate language.
Mechanics (20 possible points)	Almost entirely free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.	May contain a few errors, which may annoy the reader but not impede understanding.	Usually contains several mechanical errors, which may temporarily confuse the reader but not impede the overall understanding.	Usually contains either many mechanical errors or a few important errors that block the reader's understanding and ability to see connections between thoughts.	Usually contains so many mechanical errors that it is impossible for the reader to follow the thinking from sentence to sentence.